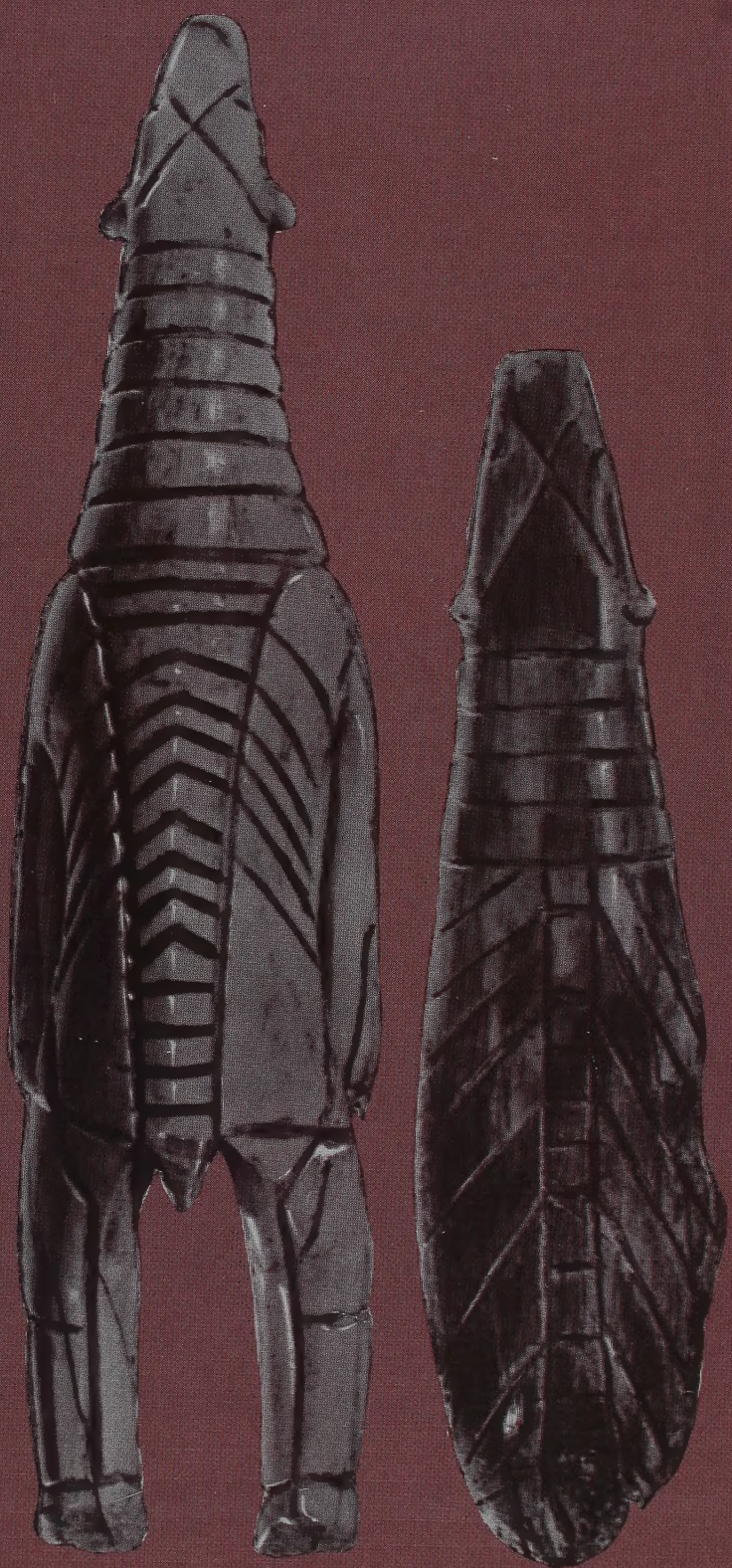


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Archaeological Resources of The Northwest Territories



Archaeological Resources of The N.W.T.

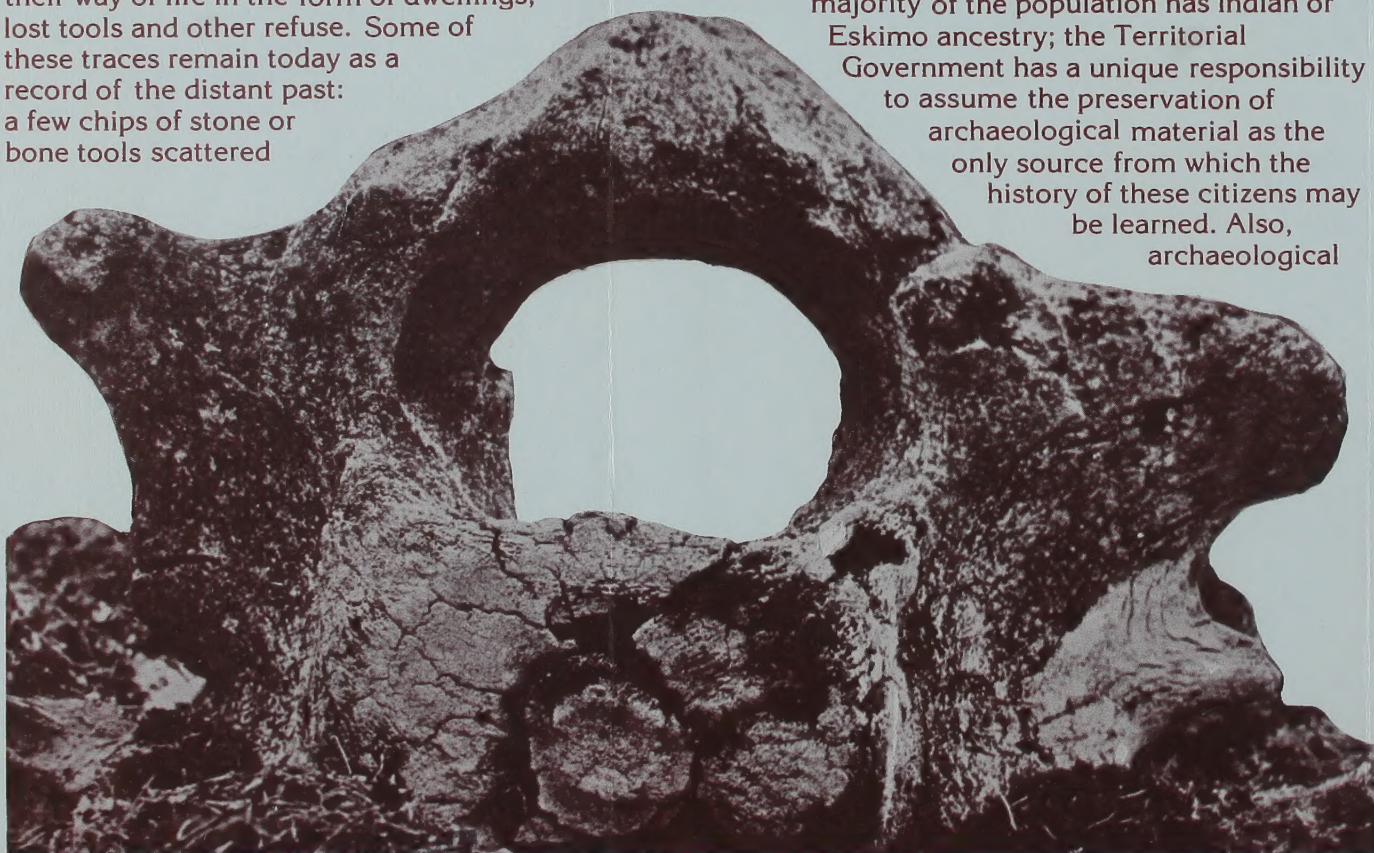
Men have lived in the N.W.T. for more than 10,000 years. These early inhabitants first opened up the country, gradually developing a way of life which allowed them to survive in areas which most would consider uninhabitable. As they moved about the land following the migrating caribou or establishing camps at dependable hunting and fishing spots, they left behind traces of their way of life in the form of dwellings, lost tools and other refuse. Some of these traces remain today as a record of the distant past: a few chips of stone or bone tools scattered

on the surface of a sandy terrace, a group of tent-rings along an old beach, or a stone grave surrounded by the belongings of the person buried.

Men of a later day, within the period of known events, have also traversed the mainland, islands and waterways of the North. They, too, left remains and evidence of their passing. To the competent archaeologist of today both prehistoric and historic archaeological sites are vitally important aids in helping to reveal the unknown history of the North and in confirming and supporting points of history.

Archaeological sites in the N.W.T. are fairly rare and the Government of the N.W.T. takes an active interest in their preservation for scientific study.

The N.W.T. is unique in Canada in that the majority of the population has Indian or Eskimo ancestry; the Territorial Government has a unique responsibility to assume the preservation of archaeological material as the only source from which the history of these citizens may be learned. Also, archaeological



sites may be developed as points of interest for citizens and for visitors to the N.W.T. Finally, the destruction of sites and the removal of archaeological material is prohibited under the Northwest Territories Archaeological Site Regulations (SOR/60-31).

Citizens of the N.W.T., operators of commercial enterprises, and visitors may assist the Territorial Government in the following ways:

- A. Report any archaeological site which you notice, to Secretary, N.W.T. Heritage Council, Government of the N.W.T., Yellowknife, N.W.T. The following information would be useful:
(1) Location of the site, on a topographical map if possible, or with relation to rivers, roads etc.
(2) What does the site look like; is it buried or on the surface; are there any structures and if so what do they resemble? Photographs are very useful.
(3) Is the site near a good hunting or fishing spot; in your opinion, why was the site located where it is?
- B. Do not disturb the site in any way. Do not collect any material from the site unless that material is in danger of being destroyed; for instance, material may be washed out of a riverbank, or it may be in the path of road construction. Any material collected in this way should be turned over to the N.W.T. Heritage Council.

The Government of the N.W.T. hopes for co-operation in preserving its slender archaeological resources, and thus preserving the chances of some day knowing more about the early occupants of the Territories.

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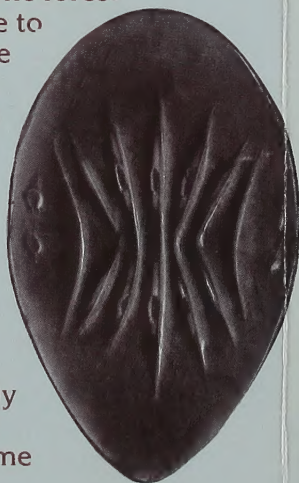
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Outline of N.W.T. Prehistory

12-10,000 years ago: The glaciers which covered most of the N.W.T. during the last ice age began to retreat toward Hudson Bay. At some time earlier than this the ancestors of the American Indians had entered Alaska from Siberia and moved south to central North America, probably through ice-free corridors along the mountains.

10-8,000 years ago: The Mackenzie River area, Great Slave and Great Bear Lakes, and the western Arctic coast were free of ice. Small bands of Indians, probably closely related to the buffalo-hunters who occupied the Plains area at that time, moved into the ice-free land and followed the migrating caribou north as far as the Arctic coast.

8-6,000 years ago: The last remnants of the glaciers finally melted, probably in the vicinity of Hudson Bay. The forest became established close to its present position as the climate became warmer. In the forest area various groups of Indians began to develop hunting and fishing patterns which allowed them to live under the new conditions; some still followed the caribou into the tundra during the summer, but probably returned to winter in the forest where fuel and game were available.



6-4,000 years ago: The ancestors of the Eskimo crossed to Alaska from Siberia and began moving eastward across the Canadian Arctic. These people learned how to hunt sea mammals, especially the seal, and this technique provided winter food and fuel which allowed them to winter on the Arctic tundra.

4-1,000 years ago: Indian cultures continued to develop in the forest zone. The tundra zone of the Canadian Arctic was occupied by an Eskimo people who appear to have become extinct about 1,000 years ago.

1,000 years ago-present: The ancestors of the various Indian groups became established in the areas which they presently occupy. A new wave of Eskimo people moved eastward from Alaska, encouraged by a milder climate and the invention of techniques which allowed them to kill whales. The descendants of these people, reduced by a period of harsh climate about 300 years ago, are the present Eskimos of the N.W.T.

Museums & Historical Sites
Department of Natural & Cultural Affairs

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